The World Bosniak Congress

**DECLARATION ON RESPECT FOR THE FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS OF BOSNIAKS IN RELATION TO THE CENSUS ON POPULATION, HOUSEHOLDS AND DWELLINGS IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA**

**Preamble**

The World Bosniak Congress has decided, at the extraordinary session of its Senate, to demand from the Bosnian public, all responsible state bodies and political organisation, as well as from foreign institutions that are tasked with the protection of universal human and ethnic rights in BiH. This request calls for urgent measures to be undertaken to protect the human rights of Bosniaks that are guarantied to all persons by relevant Declarations and other legal documents on human rights and that are also an integral part of the constitutional order of our country. The rights of Bosniaks are seriously threatened by the concept, idea, and formulation of questions prepared for the Population Census scheduled for the second half of this year in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Namely, authors of the Census, and particularly those who have formulated the questions acted only in the case of Bosniaks in such a manner that there is a collision between questions on their ethnic, national, and religious identities, which could confuse respondents and lead to the creation of wrong statistical picture of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Authors of these questions did not confront any other people in this country with any similar dilemmas vis-à-vis their ethnic identity, as they did in the case of Bosniaks, so that the identification of Serbs, Croats, Roma, Jews and others, have no alternative, although segments of these ethnicities used to have different ethnic or historical names (Aromanians, Vlachs, the people from Dubrovnik, Dalmatians, etc.).

There is no dilemma, nor should there be any choice between the names Bosniak and Muslim. It is one and the same people, and one and the same ethnic group, and regardless of the many names they could have and use, they will always be members of one and the same people.

The World Bosniak Congress considers that the act of making intentional distinction between Bosniaks and Muslims creates an additional misconceptions and reveals the intention to bring the situation with regard to the ethnic identification of Bosnians a century back - to the situation dominated by dilemmas about their identity, when they were offered to declare themselves as Serbs, Croats, ethnically undeclared, members of an ethnic group, Yugoslavs, Muslims, etc. In other words, the situation when they were offered any other identification but their own historic, ethnic and national identification as Bosniaks.

Given that the history of violence against this people has lasted for an entire century, and that the traumas caused by this issue and by the recent history are still very acute, and particularly given that, in the conditions of insufficient information of citizens about the evolution of ethnic and national declaration of Bosniaks and about the painful struggle they had to fight in order to attain their fundamental right to be called their proper name, these dilemmas may realistically confuse many people and lead them to wrong self-identification.

Insufficient information, alongside the accidentally or internationally planned confusion, and particularly the orchestrated campaign among Bosniaks to accept alternative solutions and alternative names for their national identification caused by forceful national identification of Bosniaks throughout the 20th century, may generate a false picture of the number of Bosniaks, and a misperceptions about them as a people, and consequently, about the situation of their rights.

In view of all the aforementioned facts, the World Bosniak Congress DEMANDS the following from the authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the governing bodies of the Agency for Statistics of Bosnian and Herzegovina, and from the European Commission’s Statistical Office (Eurostat):

**Article 1**

To determine a single budget for the financing of the Census at the Level of Bosnia and Herzegovina in line with the 2013 Law on Census of Population, Households and Dwellings, or which the competence lies with the Agency for Statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and to run the financing of the process of the Census of Population, Households and Dwellings from one single account.

**Article 2**

To treat the issues relating “Bosnian and Herzegovinian citizenship” (Question 19) solely and exclusively in line with the Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as in line with the 2013 Law on the Census of Population, Households and Dwellings, as well as in accordance with the European standards that envisage the exclusive citizenship of the state, and in no case the citizenship of provinces, regions, entities, and the like.

**Article 3**

To permit, in the process of preparation of methodological documents, necessary instructions and training of the census staff, the reading of the so-called sensitive questions from the Census Questionnaire (Questions 24, 25, and 26), i.e. the questions related to: Ethnic/National Declaration, Declaration on Religion, and the declaration on Mother Language, and that in no case should there be an exception from the reading of offered modalities of these questions.

**Article 4**

The composition of the Census staff and members of commissions, both at cantonal level and at the level of local self-governance, must be strictly aligned with the 2013 Law on the Census of Population, Households and Dwellings in Bosnia and Herzegovina, i.e. that they comprise legitimate representatives of all the three constituent peoples according to the 1991 Census. This bears a particular relevance in relation to the abuse and manipulation in the process of appointment of “suitable” representative of different peoples as members of local self-governance census commissions, instead of legitimate representatives of the institutions of those very peoples.

**Article 5**

To include in the application forms for candidates for members of the local self-governance census commissions, in the criteria related to status and activity, in addition to the administrative bodies referred to in the „Procedure for Selection of Census Bodies and Staff to Be Recruited for the Census of Population, Households and Dwellings in BiH in 2013, additional categories as follows: 1. A local level non-governmental sector employee; 2. A non-governmental sector employee from another BiH municipality, to ensure transparency and quality of census procedure, as well as to ensure that these representatives have the support of cultural, ethic, religious and other institutions of each specific people.

 **Article 6**

To respect, immediately and unconditionally, the demands made by Bosniak national, ethnic and cultural authorities and institutions to include under the notion of “Bosniak” also the notion of “Muslim”, and that, in the process of the processing and publishing the Census results, these names are merged and presented as one category – i.e. as “Bosniaks”, which is in line with the Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

**Article 7**

To conduct the planned Census of persons working or residing abroad, so that, in addition to other questions these persons have to answer, the Census Form also includes the following questions: 1. The pre-war place of residence in Bosnia and Herzegovina (the address at which the persons lived at the time of the 1991 Census); 2. The list of property owned by the person in the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina; 3. The person’s intention to return to Bosnia and Herzegovina; and 4. Citizenship.

 **Article 8**

To provide and ensure, pursuant to the 2013 Law on the Census of Population, Households and Dwellings in Bosnia and Herzegovina, that there shall be no abuse and unauthorised use of the single database at the level of the Agency for Statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

 **Article 9**

To stop the practice of not abiding by the Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the practice of marginalisation of the Bosniak National Question in the process of the Census, which could signal to Bosniaks that there are some hidden intentions of legalisation of Genocide and of forceful change of demographic picture of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

**Article 10**

To take these demands, immediately and unconditionally, with full conscientiousness and responsibility, because the conscientious and responsible Bosniaks shall not permit the silent murdering of the future of their children, as they shall not permit that you prevent, due to your ignorance or due to your hidden intentions, Bosniak institutions from conveying a positive message to Bosniaks to participate in the forthcoming Census.

Grand Mufti Emeritus of Bosnia dr. Mustafa CERIĆ
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